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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 4 July 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

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DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA, INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA IN THE 1990s

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA, INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS NEW AGENDA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA IN THE 1990s (agenda item 2) (E/1995/81)

The PRESIDENT said that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations system, and of the Economic and Social Council itself, was a time for celebration but it was also an occasion for reflection, for evaluating the progress of the past half century, learning from it and preparing for the future. The great forces of globalization and technological change driving the world economy into new forms of organization and patterns of production required fresh thought about policy frameworks and modes of cooperation. The implications of such changes for the developing countries in general and the African States in particular demanded serious reflection.

Africa was a test case for the United Nations and for the Council's ability to resolve critical development issues. Over the next few days, the Council would be discussing various aspects of that issue and the measures required to deal with it, measures that would have relevance not only for Africa, but for all societies facing the challenge of development. At a time when the role of the United Nations in addressing critical development issues was under intense scrutiny, the question to be addressed was how the Council could help to bring about the changes required to alleviate critical situations such as those in Africa.

The Council could make a contribution in the areas of development, partnership and inclusion. Development was an unavoidable task that could be neglected only at the international community's own peril. It was not a question of charity or alms; it was one of enlightened self-interest. Large-scale migrations, global epidemics and environmental degradation were the inevitable consequences of ignoring development issues. That was evident in the most acute form in Africa.

A related concept was partnership. Development activities could not be effective in a simplistic donor-recipient framework. Consultation and not control had to be practised: otherwise, negative attitudes would flourish - distrust and suspicion on the one side and donor fatigue and averting of eyes on the other.

The parameters of partnership led to a third essential concept, that of inclusion. Governments and intergovernmental agencies were no longer the only significant actors in development. Community-based organizations,

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private business concerns had emerged as partners in recent years and had to be given a more prominent place in development forums, as they were playing an increasingly powerful and positive role.

In addition to nurturing the concepts that created the right climate for action, the Council was also strategically placed to generate options on development issues. It received inputs from all the bodies of the United Nations system involved in development activities, not only in the form of reports but also through interaction with their representatives. That broad base of information put the Council, and the Council alone, in a position to recommend specific courses of action to the General Assembly and meant that the Council was also the only forum that could optimize the efficiency of the mechanisms used to implement development strategies. It was, in short, the place where the development machinery of the United Nations acquired coherence.

It was also the forum where the United Nations system interfaced at the highest level with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and other multilateral financial and trade bodies. That placed the Council in an unrivalled position to bring together the development efforts undertaken by the major intergovernmental actors. Social concerns could be meshed with the imperatives of fiscal and monetary prudence. More concretely, as in the case of Africa, measures could be evolved to give a human content to ongoing structural adjustment programmes.

Although the Council was thus a most useful forum for addressing key aspects of global development issues, it had not, unfortunately, lived up to its potential. The fault lay not in the way the Council was structured but in the manner in which its members used it. Many States had different ministries and agencies responsible for the various organs and agencies of the Council family and, all too frequently, they took up contradictory positions. The Council itself had to descend from the heights of abstract thought and become involved with the nuts and bolts of the development machinery. The sterile exercise of restating known positions must be replaced by the hard work of formulating fresh approaches to intractable problems.

Some structural changes might be called for, such as more frequent meetings than in the past, not necessarily at the ministerial level, and the Council's secretariat should be strengthened and improved.

Lastly, issues should be taken up that were not mere carry-overs from an obsolete past but had contemporary relevance and urgency, such as that of harnessing the information revolution to serve development needs. Industrialization had largely bypassed the African continent, possibly because one of the main elements of progress - the access to know-how and technology - was not available.

The potential benefits of the information revolution for Africa could not be overemphasized. There was a tremendous amount of technical data on development issues; a wealth of proposals to tackle poverty, disease and hunger was being generated; and models and projects demonstrating the success of particular development approaches abounded. Individual societies no longer had to work out solutions to their development problems on their own: they could tap a treasure trove of knowledge and use it for their own specific needs.

No institution was better placed than the Council to ensure that all States benefited from the information revolution. Its members could instruct the United Nations Secretariat and the executive boards of the various funds and programmes within the United Nations system to provide all Member States with easy and economical access to their computerized information and numerous databases, which could be integrated among themselves and gradually linked to similar ones outside the system. The eventual objective should be for policy makers in all States to have easy access to all the information relevant to their development needs, an objective that could be achieved within a short time-frame if the Member States started work immediately.

There was growing recognition of the fact that full use had not been made of the Council in the past and a readiness to adopt corrective measures. The members of the Council had displayed a remarkable enthusiasm for strengthening its organizational aspects and a willingness to dispense with sterile procedural issues that hampered the taking of substantive decisions. That boded well for the Council's ability to address the difficult issues before it, the most pressing one being the development of Africa, and he was confident that the results of its deliberations would clearly demonstrate its invaluable role in resolving complex development issues.

Profound changes were taking place in the world, a fact of which the international community was acutely aware. That higher level of consciousness than in the past should encourage resolute action to eradicate the age-old

afflictions of disease, hunger and poverty and to define the new paradigm of cooperation in an interdependent world. It remained to be seen whether the Council could take up that challenge.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that he was particularly pleased to be with the Economic and Social Council for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. He wished first of all to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the Council's 50 years of action in the service of development. By highlighting the need to promote "the economic and social advancement of all peoples", the Preamble of the Charter identified development as one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations. The Charter had assigned that task to the Economic and Social Council which, for the last 50 years, had been making considerable efforts to promote the development of peoples. In the contemporary world, however, the Council was compelled to seek a fresh impetus and to show still greater vigour.

In that regard, he had welcomed with great interest the final communiqué of the recent summit meeting of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries and the proposals put forward therein to enable the United Nations system to promote sustainable development more effectively and to ensure a better distribution of the fruits of growth. He intended to take those recommendations to heart, since they amounted to an essential contribution by the most highly industrialized countries towards preparing the multilateral institutions to meet the challenges of the coming century.

He fully supported the concern of the major industrialized countries that further action should be taken to reduce poverty and believed, as they did, that the persistence of extreme poverty and marginalization of the poorest countries was simply not compatible with universal aspirations for prosperity and security.

Indeed, the end of ideological confrontation had not given the world the peace or development it had a right to expect. The progress made in the global economy seemed to have bypassed the most disadvantaged countries. In some of them, the structure of the State itself had collapsed and societies had been plunged into complete disarray. Poverty, hunger and illiteracy plagued more than a fifth of the global population, and the social situation was deteriorating dangerously in many parts of the world.

In other words, economic and social problems must be at the core of the Organization's concerns, and the Economic and Social Council must live up to

that ambition by playing a more important role in the future. That was the perspective from which he viewed the various proposals put forward recently on reforming the Council. He had been struck by the will shown by the most highly industrialized countries at the G-7 Summit to develop a more effective internal policy coordination role for the Economic and Social Council and the similar will that had been evident at the Bandung meeting of non-aligned countries. For his own part, he would always be in favour of any proposals from Member States that sought to strengthen the Council's powers and spheres of action. Since entering office, he had made untiring efforts to simplify and enhance the coordination of United Nations activities. The Organization's structures had been rationalized, thereby making its work more coherent, flexible, creative and productive, but further efforts were required. It had to increase its efficiency while continuing to eliminate duplication and overlapping, with particular focus on those sectors in which its contribution was irreplaceable.

It was crucial, particularly in the economic and social field, that the various United Nations programmes should function in a better integrated manner and that the policies implemented should fall within the same framework. The Council had a paramount role to play in that regard by evaluating programmes and clarifying mandates. It was essential to impart a fresh impetus to United Nations activities and to affirm a clearer political will to strengthen the role of the Council and carry forward the reform of the Organization. In addition, it was necessary to ensure that reform at the intergovernmental level, the harmonization under way at the inter-agency level and the improvements within the United Nations Secretariat reinforced one another.

For a number of years the Organization had constantly been having to provide original responses to new needs. It must prepare itself to enter the twenty-first century, and the reform was already under way. Endeavours must be made at all times to give the United Nations the means to act efficiently, within the parameters of available resources. And the Economic and Social Council had a decisive role to play in the ongoing reform process within the United Nations.

The Council had decided to devote the high-level segment of its current session to the development of Africa. He supported that decision wholeheartedly, for the African continent represented the most urgent priority

in terms of its need for the solidarity of the international community. There again, he had been very pleased to note the serious concern expressed by the industrialized countries at their Summit with regard to sub-Saharan Africa. He welcomed their commitment to cooperate with other countries to encourage relevant multilateral institutions to reduce the extreme poverty engulfing Africa. The final communiqué of the G-7 Summit contained extremely interesting proposals on the United Nations system which should greatly inspire the Organization.

Since his election as Secretary-General of the United Nations, he had attached special importance to the action which the Organization must take to promote the development of Africa, a continent that had often baffled the world by continually giving it reasons for alternating between hope and discouragement. Some short-term indicators might appear satisfactory - for example, in 1995, the growth of total output on the continent had reached its highest level in six years. Moreover, some countries, owing primarily to economic policy reforms, had seen their gross domestic product increase substantially in the past few years.

But the structural weaknesses were there and, in many cases, they were becoming more critical. The current improvement in growth rates was still much too slight to compensate for the lag accumulated over 15 years of economic decline. Economic performance was disappointing, even in countries that had made substantial reforms. In 1994, for instance, two African countries - Angola and Eritrea - had been added by the General Assembly to the list of the least developed countries while, at the same time, only Botswana had moved out of that category. Currently, therefore, out of a total of 40 least developed countries, 33 were African.

Among the factors hindering Africa's development, mention could be made of inadequate infrastructures, weak institutions, poorly utilized human resources, a great vulnerability to natural and climatic disasters and the impact of unfavourable terms of trade. To that must be added the debt burden, runaway population growth and environmental deterioration. Twenty-five per cent of the arid lands in Africa were experiencing soil degradation, the highest percentage in the world.

Development in Africa was also seriously hampered by the unstable political situation there. Admittedly, South Africa continued to advance

along the road to democracy, peace had returned to Mozambique and the situation in Angola allowed for a glimpse at last of some real hope of national reconciliation.

Yet the African continent was still too often the scene of ethnic confrontations and civil wars that compounded the existing poverty and underdevelopment. Some countries continued to offer the distressing spectacle of peoples tearing each other to pieces. And in various parts of the continent, tensions were liable to degenerate into bloody combats at any moment if care was not taken. At the end of 1994, Africa had had nearly 7 million refugees and about 2 million displaced persons, the highest figure in the world. Institutional and political instability, persistent tensions and incessant confrontations were known to be major obstacles to development. While there could be no peace without development, it was also not possible to have sustainable development without peace. Conflicts helped to spawn poverty, and poverty was itself an undeniable factor in conflict. That vicious cycle absolutely had to be broken.

For a number of years, the United Nations system had been trying to overcome those difficulties and promote Africa's development. Action was being stepped up with that goal in mind throughout the whole spectrum of United Nations agencies and programmes. The United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa and most of the specialized agencies were sparing no effort to bring help to the continent by way of technical, financial and humanitarian assistance.

But the international community must go still further, for it was essential to meet the increasingly pressing needs of African women and men. That was why the Organization had made the development of Africa one of its priorities for the 1990s. Those efforts fell under the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), adopted by the General Assembly in 1991 and reviewed in 1994.

Last autumn, to round out the activities already undertaken under the Agenda, he had made a point of launching a special initiative on behalf of Africa in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). He had asked that a steering committee be given the task of formulating specific projects in the short and medium term to promote the development of Africa in areas

like food security, institutional strengthening, private-sector expansion, desertification and social development. He hoped that the Council's deliberations over the next two days would help to give new impetus to that initiative.

As he saw it, in order to sustain the development of the countries of Africa, the Organization must move in several directions that should be given priority. To begin with, the United Nations must help Africa to strengthen its regional structures. With that in mind, the bonds of cooperation that already existed between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) must be strengthened. The Economic Commission for Africa must also be increasingly ready to step to the fore. There were so many economic customs and administrative obstacles and infrastructural and communications shortcomings that could be overcome by better inter-African cooperation. In that respect, he was heartened by the fact that the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community had come fully into force. And he could only applaud initiatives like that taken by the Tunisian Government when it had organized a pan-African conference of energy ministers in May 1995.

Furthermore, the United Nations absolutely must help African countries to diversify their economies. Africa's products had to be allowed access to foreign markets. It must be fully recognized that Africa was the only region in the world that might be hurt by the Uruguay Round agreements. Indeed, the challenge to trade preferences and the anticipated rise in prices for food products, which the African continent imported more heavily than it exported, would probably not be offset - at least in the short term - by the trade stimulus which, for other countries, would be the chief result of the Uruguay Round.

Help was therefore needed to counterbalance that temporarily negative impact. Assistance should allow new export capabilities to be created and production to be diversified, with a shift towards non-traditional sectors. That was the thinking behind the creation of a diversification fund to facilitate the establishment of investment credits.

It was also necessary for the international community to decide, at long last, to take on the nagging problem of African debt. A large number of countries in Africa were being crushed by an unbearable external debt burden, and many of them were accumulating unmanageable arrears. The outstanding

principal of Africa's long-term debt amounted to US$ 37 billion, accounting for half the outstanding debt of the entire third world. Obviously, the issue of finding the financial resources needed for African recovery and development would not be satisfactorily dealt with until the debt problem was solved. He wished to draw special attention to the debt overhang of certain African countries with multilateral financial institutions. According to the World Bank, only 6 out of the 21 most indebted African countries were in a position to repay their debt, even under the softest borrowing terms.

Beyond the debt problem, he trusted that the international community would not only maintain but also raise its level of assistance to the African continent. Africa was the only region in the world that had not benefited from the recent increase in private capital flows to the developing countries. Except for a few countries, official financing remained the main source of capital for the African continent. The drop in official development assistance that had occurred in 1993 was particularly alarming. One source of serious concern was that the United States share in total official development assistance to African countries had fallen from 17 per cent 10 years previously to 12 per cent in 1992-1993. Only an increase in the European Union's share, which currently accounted for 40 per cent of the total amount, had made it possible to make up for that reduction.

The United Nations should also help African countries to establish effective social institutions. It must never be forgotten that social development depended above all on the political will of States. The State could not be reduced to a closed circle of political leaders: it was first of all an administration - one that was sound, honest, devoted, well-informed, concerned with public service and the general interest and attentive to the social needs of its citizens, both men and women. Everyone was aware that social administration had yet to be created, for the most part, in many African countries.

Lastly, it was essential for the United Nations to support the efforts of African countries to improve public education and vocational training. Africa's population, far from being a handicap, was an inestimable resource and guarantor of its future, but only if enough food and medical attention were assured: those were the basic conditions of social development. In addition, knowledge must be openly shared, the transfer of technology encouraged and communications and development in rural areas

promoted. In that regard, he drew attention to a proposal to finance research to promote a "green revolution" in Africa formulated in the World Economic and Social Survey, 1995. Nothing would be possible for the international community, however, unless African men and women took their fate into their own hands.

In those efforts to further the development of Africa, he attached great importance to any initiatives taken within the Organization of African Unity. That institution must play a larger role in promoting the continent's economic and social development. In that perspective, he hoped that new ties would be established between the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations. The United Nations must ask Africans themselves - all Africans - to become the driving force behind development efforts.

Governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the African people all had a decisive role to play, and he had no doubt that they would be able to take up the development challenge. He believed deeply in the capacity of African men and women for work, action, initiative and imagination. He was also aware of their strong sense of solidarity, without which real economic and social development was unimaginable.

He had wanted to take a few minutes to reaffirm the importance he attached personally to the development of Africa. For him, the issue was one of the most essential and urgent of all of those facing the international community. He eagerly awaited the comments and suggestions of the members of the Council, so that a combined effort could be made towards the development of Africa.

In 1995, when the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was being celebrated, the quest for solidarity with regard to Africa was one of the most noble tributes that could be paid to the founding fathers of the Charter. He would like the coming year, declared by the United Nations as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, to be an occasion for the United Nations system to redouble its efforts and do an even better job of coordinating its actions towards social and economic progress, especially in Africa. It was from that perspective, and with hope, that he was pleased to have been able to address the Council. He would follow its work and take note of its deliberations with great interest and serious attention.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the plans and programmes sanctioned by the United Nations

and others - for the purpose of cooperating with African countries, together with the African people's own determined efforts - had led to heartening advances in Africa's development, as the Secretary-General had observed. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the reforms and new policies adopted by many African nations, and were very glad that several African nations had achieved or exceeded the 6 per cent annual GDP growth target set under the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). They also shared in the sense of achievement of the other African nations which, while not having reached the target, had registered consistent positive growth over the past few years.

The social and economic situation in the whole of Africa, however, continued to require improvement. Many programmes had not reached completion; and many man-made and natural crises had diverted precious resources away from development needs. However, the African nations' determination to break out of the cycle of underdevelopment was an inspiration to all; they had demonstrated how to face up to the increasingly complex problems of an interdependent world with courage and fortitude.

At the forefront of their approach to the problem was their recognition that global interdependence was both a cause and a solution. As the OAU Council of Ministers had observed, in their June 1995 resolution on African development, and the implementation of UN-NADAF, the African countries' position in the world economy remained weak, characterized by a diminishing share of world trade, foreign financial assistance and investment, and a relatively low level of technological progress.

The Group of 77 and China fully supported, therefore, the measures proposed by OAU, and had taken note of the Secretary-General's report (E/1995/81) - a document which it wished had been circulated earlier. That report endorsed the OAU proposals, foremost of which was the call by its Council of Ministers for the international community's cooperation in creating an appropriate international economic environment to support and facilitate the African countries' economic growth and development. The OAU proposals and the Secretary-General's report provided a framework for the accomplishment of that task. The former also identified areas where all could participate in promoting Africa's progress and development - areas such as economic policy, financial resources, capacity-building and infrastructure modernization,

environment and sustainable development, increased support for regional and economic integration and Africa's greater participation in international trade.

With regard to financial resources, a once-and-for-all solution had to be found to the external debt problem not only of the least developed countries (LDCs), most of which were in Africa, but of Africa's low-income and lower-middle-income countries. It was likewise important to maintain or augment the levels of official development assistance (ODA); the 20/20 plan for social development should be carefully studied and, where feasible, implemented. Capacity-building, not only in realistic policy formulation but also in the development of technical skills and know-how, was of primary importance. It was important, in that regard, to support the UNDP Capacity 21 Programme, ECDC/TCDC programmes and South-South projects.

A steadily-growing income from international trade was often worth more than mere ODA. The international community must thus maintain profitable prices for African commodity exports, while actively helping the commodity-dependent countries to attune their diversification programmes to the world market. The African countries themselves must hasten those diversification programmes, particularly in the production of items which could enjoy comparative advantage.

Productivity in many African countries was often excessively hindered by natural and man-made calamities. It was important, therefore, that the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, should be implemented by coordinated international action, even before the First Conference of the Parties took place; the reorganized United Nations Sahelian Office should be a catalyst for such action.

Nations, particularly in the developing world, could learn some valuable lessons from the endeavour to promote Africa's further development. The challenges would not only demonstrate how development problems should be met and addressed but would also provide inspiration to all in facing their own development needs and the demands of an increasingly interdependent world.

Mr. DICENTA (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union wished to reiterate its traditional solidarity with Africa and the importance it attached to that continent's economic, social and political development. Although some countries and

regions had benefited from economic expansion over the past decade, the period had been disappointing for most of the continent, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, which contained two thirds of the world's least developed countries.

Despite some positive developments, including the post-apartheid situation in southern Africa, the peace process in Angola, democratization in Mozambique, the success of a number of emergency operations and of efforts to reduce public debt as a percentage of GNP, and the trade prospects emerging from the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, progress in Africa remained inadequate and uneven. Civil and political conflict, with its attendant humanitarian problems, continued to hamper development, calling for ever more international aid and diverting resources from long-term development. Africa's population explosion, the growth of cities and the resultant threat to food security were also disquieting. In that regard, effective implementation of the recommendations adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development would be crucial.

In the economic field, most of the signs were still discouraging. Where, however, courageous policies had been pursued, e.g. in the CFA zone after devaluation, economic growth had improved. The external debt burden remained heavy on many countries, and Africa's share of world trade was currently below 1 per cent. The pace of industrialization was slow, and the agricultural deficit meant that the needs of a growing population could still not be met.

As had often been said, the African countries must themselves overcome the multifaceted crisis faced by their continent, although they should be supported by the international community. Priorities and related strategies, relevant to the various countries' needs, must be established, focusing primarily on basic social sectors such as health, education, nutrition and job-creation. The development of the continent's human resources was vital, as was a reduction in excessive military expenditure.

There had been generally positive results from the structural adjustment programmes and reforms instituted since the 1980s and currently being implemented by 30 African countries, although such programmes had, in many cases, involved high social costs. Nevertheless, such reforms should be pursued and intensified, albeit accompanied by appropriate social policies.

Africa had benefited little from the growth in private-investment flows from industrialized to developing countries, which had been one of the

strongest trends in the world economy. In addition to political stability, therefore, an essential requirement was to apply effective monetary and fiscal policies, encourage the growth of national savings, promote the mobilization of domestic resources and attract private investment and other financial flows. Since African economies often depended on commodity exports, diversification efforts were essential, and the world community could help by means of technical and financial assistance, including feasibility studies, making use of existing institutions such as the United Nations Common Fund for Commodities and the African Development Fund.

International solidarity was basic to Africa's development. The international community, and the European Union in particular, had mobilized resources for that purpose; in fact, international assistance to Africa, in both absolute and per capita terms, had been higher than that provided to the other continents during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, net ODA to sub-Saharan Africa by the European Union, including bilateral assistance, had exceeded $10 billion. In the framework of the Lomé Convention, the Union had recently decided to increase the total of the European Development Fund to 13,307 million ecus ($17,750 million) in order to bring to a successful conclusion the negotiations for a partial revision of the Fourth Lomé Convention; in addition, it had set a figure of 4,685 million ecus ($6,250 million) for financial cooperation with the Mediterranean countries in the period 1995-1999, which would benefit several North African countries.

Although the Lomé Convention guaranteed the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries free access to the community market, for all industrial products and many agricultural products, the participation of those countries had fallen to 4 per cent, half what it had previously been, since the negotiation of the First Lomé Convention, which showed that it was vital for the African economies to become more competitive. It was encouraging that, during the first 10 months of 1994, the ACP countries, particularly those in Africa, had increased their exports to the European market by 24 per cent; but a concerted effort by the entire international community was needed to assist the African countries to improve their trade competitiveness if they were to benefit from the new opportunities stemming from the conclusion of the Uruguay Round.

The European Union was ready to contribute to that common effort. In that regard, it reiterated its willingness to achieve, as soon as possible,

the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA, and of 0.15 per cent for the least developed countries, most of which were situated in Africa. Assistance should focus on the poorest countries and on the least advantaged sectors of society.

External indebtedness continued, despite cancellations on the part of bilateral creditors, to be gravely disquieting for many African countries. The recent measures adopted by the Paris Club in that regard were welcome. Nevertheless, the high percentage of multilateral debt in some of the poorest countries' total volume of indebtedness was striking, although African countries had benefited from a high level of credit on concessional terms. The international financial institutions should strive to apply existing instruments more flexibly and seek innovative solutions relevant to each country's particular situation.

The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) offered a suitable framework for the action the United Nations system should take, as a matter of priority, for Africa's economic, social and environmental development. Its impact was reflected in the priority accorded to Africa in a number of General Assembly resolutions, the plans of action adopted at the major conferences, the programmes of various United Nations agencies, and other new international instruments. The General Assembly's medium-term review of the UN-NADAF would provide an opportunity to assess the results and make any necessary revision of United Nations action for the benefit of Africa.

Mr. GODFRAIN (France) said the world was changing apace. Trade liberalization and the rapid growth of foreign investments in regions opening up to the world economy were aspects of the growing globalization of world affairs. Yet Africa was finding it difficult to benefit from such developments. Many African countries, especially the least developed ones, were in danger of being permanently marginalized. Threatened with a worsening of poverty, often linked to excessive population increase, they saw their share of international trade stagnating or even diminishing and had been unable to profit from a resurgence of private investment.

Nevertheless, there were some encouraging developments in Africa. Side by side with regions where conflicts and civil strife were inflicting incalculable suffering on populations and shutting off all prospects of development, democratic States were gaining strength and promoting individual initiative. Some States had benefited from the devaluation of the CFA franc

to boost their foreign trade or had undertaken structural adjustment policies that heralded financial rehabilitation. Economic decline was thus not inevitable: the multifaceted situation in a changing Africa attested to that.

The question was what the international community could do to promote the development of Africa. In the first place, the African countries must be encouraged to adopt coherent policies that created the necessary environment for economic initiative, in which connection the rule of law was essential for the expansion of private investment. They must also continue to take the necessary steps for lasting economic growth. Such policies were all the more difficult in that they must relate to the medium term and prepare the future. Education, for example, was often the victim of adjustment policies, although it bore the seeds of future growth and was the basis for true development.

The international community must not, however, be relieved of its responsibilities for development assistance, since the efforts of the developing countries required external support. Thus the debt-servicing burden on many developing countries had been taken into account by donors, which had proposed a number of facilities - such as the so-called Naples terms - that were being widely applied.

Such external support was particularly necessary for the least developed countries, which could not rely solely on export earnings or private investment to trigger off their growth. Such support was a duty, but it was also in the interests of the industrialized States, for geographical and historical reasons. He therefore welcomed the decision to provide the European Development Fund with the resources it required for effective cooperation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

His delegation took very seriously the commitment, reaffirmed at the World Summit for Social Development, to devote 0.7 per cent of the country's GNP to official development assistance (ODA) and had almost reached that target. France had close ties with many African States and continued to regard development assistance as one of the pillars of its policies. Development assistance was, however, under fire. Public opinion in both developed and developing countries was asking why the results had been so meagre, why poverty and even famine persisted and why crises occurred that destroyed years of development efforts in a matter of weeks. It was by no means a coincidence that ODA funds were declining.

That tendency could be corrected, but the solution did not lie only in the level of financial contributions to development: effectiveness was all-important at the current juncture. The development agencies and institutions of the United Nations system had acquired a vast range of experience and acknowledged expertise in various areas and a well-established presence in the field. Those were real assets, but they had to be used more effectively for the development of Africa.

His Government considered that the United Nations agencies must focus on precise objectives within their various mandates. Genuine priorities must be fixed and less important activities abandoned. They must be careful not to get involved in too many new areas of activity. UN-NADAF was a step in the right direction. Development agencies should avoid spreading themselves too thin and the proliferation of small ad hoc missions. They must address real needs and give priority to the least developed countries. That required close cooperation between programmes and activities, between the agencies of the United Nations system and with bilateral cooperation programmes. For its part, his delegation was in favour of increased reliance on multi-bilateral operations.

There must be genuine cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to ensure complementarity. The Council had an important role to play in that regard, and France, together with its European Union partners, had made some proposals towards that end. It was desirable that an open and frank discussion should take place on the major challenges of development involving the Council and senior officials of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

It would be pointless to treat the interests of the various groups as if they were contradictory: countries of the North, like those of the South, faced a common challenge - the war against poverty. What was needed was greater effectiveness within the limits of the resources available. If his delegation called for reform, it was not to protect the interests of the donors but to improve a development-assistance tool which belonged equally to the countries of South and North and was still one of the fundamental reasons for the existence of the United Nations.

Mr. HAAVISTO (Observer for Finland) said that, as the Secretary-General had observed in one of his statements, aid and assistance

had, for over 30 years, been pouring into Africa with seemingly little effect; donors had lost their optimism, and many recipients had become trapped in a cycle of dependence. More effective tools must be found urgently and prompter and more visible results achieved. The Secretary-General's appeal for change was based on a correct analysis and the reasons for the crisis of confidence must be identified and the causes attacked with vigour and persistence.

In a larger historical and global perspective, there had been some positive achievements in Africa, e.g. in life expectancy, education, housing, product diversification and trade relations. It was more important than ever to focus on Africa's own resource potential, in which respect the positive developments in South Africa, Mozambique and Angola gave new hope. External support and financing, by both direct aid and investment promotion, must be continued; Africa would remain one of his Government's development priorities.

Many of Africa's problems stemmed from widespread political instability and social unrest culminating, in many cases, in internal and inter-State conflicts and presenting the single gravest threat to the continent's future. Agreement on preventive action and lasting solutions should be the foremost concern of African political leaders, supported by the international community.

Democracy was essential to political stability and development. His Government, which had consistently supported democratization efforts in Africa, was encouraged by the progress made in that regard in many sub-Saharan African countries. In addition to democracy and respect for human rights, there was also a need for good governance, including popular participation in the political process, prudent and transparent management of resources, and respect for the rule of law. In an increasingly interdependent world, the African countries needed to adjust their economies and pursue an economic policy that created confidence among domestic and foreign investors alike.

The results of structural adjustment programmes had not always been very positive. Development and growth took time, and Governments must pursue their reforms with persistence. On the other hand, IMF and the World Bank must carefully review their policies in order to avoid unnecessary hardship for the poor and vulnerable. Nor must economic growth, vital as it was, be at the expense of environmental damage and the depletion of natural resources; growth must be sustainable for the benefit of current and future generations. The population factor must be tackled in the wider context of spheres such as

education, health services and AIDS prevention and the rights of women, including equal opportunities for girls, should receive special attention. Environmental aspects must be taken into account in all policy planning; sustainable development required the right balance between growth, environmental considerations and income distribution.

Trade, though the major force of economic growth, would not alone suffice to secure development. To benefit fully from the results of the Uruguay Round, African economies needed not only an enlargement and diversification of export production but also external technical assistance. Suitable programmes were in hand, and the value of commodity exports had grown significantly.

Debt repayment by most African countries was not a realistic possibility for the foreseeable future. Consequently, the levels of debt alleviation, write-offs and rescheduling, by the bilateral and multilateral institutions, must be high enough to have an effect on the countries concerned. To restore African development would require substantial financial resources, which required effective mobilization of domestic resources, as well as improved trade and debt relief.

Development assistance still played a crucial role in that regard and the quality of development cooperation, as well as the volume of aid, must be seriously addressed. The promotion of human resources and capacity-building were essential to poverty alleviation and social development, and Africans themselves must play the main role in that regard. Nevertheless, the African nations could not be expected to remain hopeful if the rest of the word was apathetic about their development problems.

Mr. GAUZE (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, while political, macroeconomic, financial and structural reforms could help to create an environment favourable to economic growth and social development, Africa would be better equipped if there was also a full partnership with donors. In that connection, resources were essential to shape the Africa of tomorrow and strengthen its economic possibilities.

The past decade had been, for Africa, characterized externally by a difficult international environment and internally by the aggravation of internal and external imbalances. Increased pressure on the prices of most commodities the continent exported and restricted access to the resources of the international community, coupled with internal rigidities, had perpetuated significant imbalances in the African economies, particularly with regard to

public finances, thereby compromising the results expected from the adjustment measures that had been adopted since the 1980s. In fact, the world prices of agricultural exports had long been affected by a depressed international economic situation and the inability of producers to adopt a common strategy.

Foreign direct investment (FDI), which had become the most important component of the flow of external private resources to the developing countries, had amounted in 1993 to $71 billion and had constituted 39 per cent of world FDI. However, Africa's share had fallen from 13 per cent in 1985 to 10 per cent in 1993, although FDI had increased in absolute terms.

As for official development assistance (ODA), it had fallen by 5 per cent in 1993 and had declined by a further 1.8 per cent in 1994 to a level of $58.8 billion. The relationship between ODA and the GDP of the industrialized countries had been 0.29 per cent in 1994, the lowest level in 21 years.

With respect to flows, Africa's share had declined from 14 per cent in 1982/1986 to 10 per cent in 1987/1991 and to about 5 per cent in 1992/1994.

It was clear that the continuing debt problem had prolonged the continent's balance-of-payments difficulties which, in turn, had hampered the liberalization of capital transactions and the introduction of greater flexibility for the repatriation of profits, essential elements for a favourable investment climate. According to UNCTAD, African debt had increased from 60 per cent of GNP in 1986/1990 to 67 per cent in 1994, a figure twice that for Latin America and Asia. External debt thus remained a major constraint in the elaboration and conduct of development policies in all African countries.

The 1990s would be crucial for Africa. The African peoples, having decided to take their destiny into their own hands, had chosen the long but salutary road of positive reforms designed to promote welfare, and improve the quality of life.

The African countries agreed with the Bretton Woods institutions, international organizations and friendly development partners that UN-NADAF must be based on an improvement of the macroeconomic context to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty; an upgrading of the human resources and, in particular, strengthening of local capacities for the management of development so as to ensure food security, education and health care for all, an increase in the growth of agricultural production of at least 4 per cent

per annum; increased attention to protection of the environment and control of the degradation and exhaustion of the continent's natural resources; a massive increase in private investment and strengthening of regional cooperation and economic integration to maximize the advantages of all the countries in the region.

In the 1980s, the deterioration in the terms of trade, the rise in interest rates and excessive debt had resulted in difficulties in his country's agricultural sector. Moreover, there had been a general decline in economic activity, and a worsening of the budget deficit. Since 1994, however, the economy had begun a phase of recovery, reduction in the internal and external debt, and a devaluation of the CFA franc of 50 per cent, which had helped to improve the competitiveness of the economy and domestic production.

In accordance with the medium-term programme, his Government was determined to strengthen diversification, to increase the growth rate to about 6.5 per cent in 1995 and to achieve an even higher growth rate in 1997. It hoped to promote the private sector, develop its human resources and strengthen its campaign against poverty in country and town alike.

To achieve those objectives, it was essential to have a manageable level of external indebtedness and to mobilize resources from institutional and bilateral partners in support of the structural reform process which was essential for development and progress in Africa. In that connection, he noted with concern the difficulties encountered in the replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA), due to the reluctance of several donor countries, which both mentioned constraints of a budgetary nature and questioned the effectiveness of that type of assistance.

At a time when a broad consensus was emerging on the need for economic adjustment in Africa and when many countries, including his own, had taken courageous measures to apply economic reform programmes, it was essential that the donors and development partners should make a positive response to Africa's need for special financial assistance programmes and debt relief measures. The donor community must be mobilized to provide Africa with the moral and financial support it needed to speed up its development in the 1990s and beyond.

His Government reaffirmed, to Africa and to the world, its determination to implement during the 1990s and beyond a coherent economic policy supported

by rigorous sectoral strategies and in-depth structural reforms. To achieve those objectives, however, it was essential that the necessary external resources be effectively mobilized so as to consolidate domestic resources and promote economic growth and social development.

Mr. SEE-YOUNG LEE (Republic of Korea) said that, for decades, the countries of Africa had been endeavouring to develop themselves, individually or in cooperation with the international institutions, and it was encouraging that eight of them had achieved or exceeded the annual GDP growth target of 6 per cent set under UN-NADAF. Africa still faced many problems, however, which called for shared responsibility on the part of the international community.

Many prescriptions had been suggested to address African development problems, but he believed from his own country's experience, that capacity-building was the most important element. Addressing the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning at the thirtieth session of the Economic Commission for Africa, he had suggested a primary emphasis on capacity-building, with particular reference to the strengthening of human resources and the revitalization of agriculture. In many parts of the world, human capital had proved to be a critical factor in economic effectiveness. Although each country might have different policy priorities, his own country's experience had shown that intensive investment in basic education and vocational training was a prerequisite.

Furthermore, the enhancement of food security should be the backbone of any effort for economic development in Africa, where over three quarters of the total population of every country consisted of rural dwellers. The fact that, in the 1960s, agricultural products had accounted for 60 per cent of all African exports while the food self-sufficiency rate had reached 98 per cent, demonstrated Africa's potential for agricultural development. Emphasis should thus be placed on enhanced agricultural productivity and technology to ensure food security, which could also lead to the promotion of related industries such as food processing.

Such indigenous efforts should be complemented by international support, through the provision of financial resources and the sharing of development experience. With regard to financial resources, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that some innovative measures were urgently needed to alleviate the burden of the heavily indebted countries, some 30 per cent of

whose budgets went on debt servicing. Steps should also be taken to reverse the downward trend in the absolute level of ODA to the African countries.

The Secretary-General's report (E/1995/81) rightly emphasized technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). His own country was always ready to share the experience it had gained on its painstaking path to development; for more than a decade, it had been operating various programmes to bring together government policy makers so as to facilitate their efforts to devise strategies for development. It had established, earlier in the year, a Cooperation Fund with ECA, and intended to increase its contribution to Africa's development efforts.

The President of the Republic of Korea had stated, at the World Summit for Social Development, that his country would gradually increase the level of its support for human resources development in the developing countries, and had announced a plan to provide technical training for over 30,000 people from developing countries by the year 2010. African countries would be given top priority in the implementation of that plan, which would focus particularly on capacity-building.

Africa's great potential must not be forgotten. Although the array of challenges might take time to overcome, it was to be hoped that the African countries and the international community, through commitment and a determined combination of effort, could reach the common goals on the threshold of the new century. Lastly, if the Council was to be truly relevant to the current issue, the high-level segment must not merely repeat old diagnoses and prescriptions. Only five years remained before the final review of UN-NADAF and he sincerely hoped that the outcome of the current discussions could be translated into concrete actions during that period.

Mr. DIOUF (Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that Africa was engaged in a relentless struggle to cope with the longest and most severe emergency since its independence. It was the only part of the world in which per capita food production had declined over the past 25 years. About 40 per cent of the population of the continent suffered from chronic undernourishment.

Yet Africa's natural resources, although unevenly distributed, were considerable and relatively unexploited. Only 7 per cent of the continent's arable land was currently irrigated. Its sizeable forest resource base, covering 18 per cent of its land area, was threatened by deforestation, caused

mainly by population pressure and extensive farming. Livestock production accounted for up to 25 per cent of agricultural output, but there were still enormous constraints, particularly with regard to animal feed and the processing and marketing of livestock products. Africa's once considerable fishery potential had been largely depleted as a result of overfishing, in part by foreign fleets.

Appropriate strategies should enable the African countries to develop their own fishery capacity, with the participation of private investors working in a mutually advantageous partnership. Africa also required assistance for enhanced utilization of livestock and grassland resources, soil and forest management, protection of genetic resource diversity and the sustainable exploitation of its fishery resources. There was also a need to promote agricultural diversification, thus helping to reduce rural poverty and ensure the promotion of African women which was so fundamental to agricultural production.

At the subregional level, the successes achieved by southern African countries in coping with famine during the latest drought, thanks to the combined efforts of international aid, subregional cooperation and the efficiency of the FAO-supported Early-Warning System, should encourage the continent and its partners to strengthen and extend those catalysts to success. In addition, the OAU Council of Ministers had shown courage and determination in tackling such critical and delicate issues as the links between "good governance" and peace and stability, on the one hand, and sustainable development, on the other.

FAO's member States had decided to give priority to food security at all levels by helping to implement integrated programmes. Those activities had received a fresh impetus with the launching of two new special programmes: Food Production in Support of Food Security in Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries, and the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases. Africa was the first continent to benefit from those two programmes.

In the context of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, FAO had offered technical support in the design of the Common African Agricultural Programme. It also stood ready to participate, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in the implementation of UN-NADAF.

In 1994, some 46 per cent of FAO field projects had related to Africa. Despite the current budgetary restrictions, the Organization could certainly do more in response to Africa's enormous need for development assistance. In view of the chronic undernourishment of 800 million people, 210 million in Africa alone, there was an imperative need to remobilize the international community at the highest levels in order to adapt policies and a plan of action to tackle that challenge successfully. The FAO Council had thus recommended the convening of a World Food Summit, an initiative that had received wide support throughout the world. More particularly, the OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government had adopted a resolution designed to ensure adequate preparation of the African approach prior to participation in the World Food Summit.

Mr. NIASSE (Senegal) said that the presence in the Council of so many ministers, not only from Africa but also from the other continents, showed the extent to which the international community was rightly concerned about Africa and involved in the search for just and durable solutions to all the ills affecting that continent. It was to be hoped, therefore, that a specific action-oriented programme would emerge from the Council's deliberations and be applied as quickly as possible.

An initial evaluation of the results achieved by UN-NADAF clearly showed the justification for Africa's disappointment. Had the New Agenda been properly implemented in the past five years, Africa would have had a different face to show to the world. Unfortunately, through no fault of its own, Africa was no better off than five years previously, because the promises made by its development partners in the New Agenda had not been kept. Despite the agreement that Africa should occupy a primary place in the concerns of the international community, it was the first to suffer from the drying up of ODA resources. It was difficult to reconcile the objectives of UN-NADAF and so many other programmes with that drastic reduction of the resources devoted to development assistance.

That trend must be reversed without delay, as must the flow of capital from the African countries to the developed countries. Servicing of Africa's external debt was one reason for that flow, but not the only one. Others were the increasing deterioration in the terms of trade and the inadequate transfer of technology and capital. Asia had benefited from technology and capital transfer and the result had been a spectacular development of many of its

countries. If Africa were given such tools, if its products were purchased at fair and profitable prices and a solution were found to its debt problem, it, too, would astonish the world.

The development of Africa was blocked by the problems he had mentioned, aggravated by others such as the closure of markets to its products, non-existent or ageing infrastructures, inadequate telecommunications, poverty, degradation of the environment and natural disasters such as desertification and diseases of human beings and livestock.

With the assistance of friendly countries and international financial institutions, Senegal had entered upon the difficult but indispensable path of economic recovery. Its people had suffered as a result, because the social dimension of structural adjustment policies had long been neglected. Nevertheless, the results were there and proved that the country was moving in the right direction. For example, it had been able to contain the negative effects of the 50 per cent devaluation of the CFA franc.

At the external level, Senegal continued to participate actively in the search for global solutions to the problems of Africa and of the developing countries in general, African economic integration being one of the cornerstones of its policy. In that connection, he mentioned the recent establishment of a mixed Senegal/Guinea-Bissau structure for the joint exploitation of the resources of their continental shelf.

While Africa must manage its own economy and resources, it could make progress in that direction only if its situation was given sympathetic understanding by its Northern partners. In that connection, he expressed his Government's appreciation of the positive position taken up by the President of France at recent important international meetings.

Mr. LI Zhaoxing (China) said that, on the understanding that the development of Africa required, in addition to the efforts of the African countries and peoples themselves, vigorous support by the international community, UN-NADAF had been adopted by the General Assembly in 1991. Since then, many African countries had tried hard to fulfil their commitments under the New Agenda, introducing economic reforms to develop human resources, agriculture and food and processing industries and to promote education and training. In support of those efforts, the international community had adopted a number of measures and the United Nations system was coordinating its activities and formulating specific programmes and projects.

The African economy, as part of the world economy, had to be developed, because there could be no world peace in the absence of a stable Africa. The members of the international community, especially the developed countries, must demonstrate a strong political will and far-sightedness and work for Africa in a down-to-earth manner, honouring their commitments under UN-NADAF and help the African countries to eradicate poverty and revitalize their economies.

There had been a number of "prescriptions" for the development of Africa, but they had yielded few results, because they attempted to apply ready-made economic development models that were not in keeping with the specific conditions of the African countries. The international community should respect the social systems and development models chosen by those countries which were attuned to their own circumstances. It was undesirable to attach any conditions whatsoever to the provision of assistance to Africa.

A favourable external environment was indispensable for Africa's economic recovery and development. To that end, the developed countries needed to increase their ODA to Africa, reduce drastically and write off the African countries' debts and open their markets to African exports, granting them concessional trade terms. When coordinating their macroeconomic policies, the developed countries should accommodate, as far as possible, the interests of the African countries and take account of any undesirable effects such policies might have on those countries.

African countries should intensify their economic cooperation, learn from each other's experience and work for a strong and united Africa. While deepening regional cooperation, they should also expand their trade with countries outside the region so as to join the process of globalization of the world economy.

The United Nations system should attach importance not only to the question of peace in Africa but also to the question of its development. The relevant United Nations organs and agencies should accord priority to the implementation of UN-NADAF in their respective activities and generate sufficient resources to support Africa in its endeavour to revitalize its economy. The United Nations should play a pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of UN-NADAF and in coordinating the system-wide efforts.

The difficult situation confronting Africa was a temporary one. The past year had witnessed positive changes in the situation on both the political and the economic fronts. With the vigorous support of the international community, the Governments and peoples of Africa would succeed in channelling their efforts towards the goal of economic and social development.

His own country had provided some assistance to African countries in that endeavour, in the context of South-South cooperation, and had recently revised its mode of economic assistance for the sake of expanding cooperation and improving efficiency. His Government would encourage, through policy guidance and financial support, Chinese enterprises and companies to enter into direct cooperation with those in recipient countries with a view to expanding the areas of its cooperation. Governmental assistance to Africa gave priority to the development of medium and small-size production projects in areas where there was a need and where local resources were available. It was also ready to undertake certain social-welfare projets, such as hospitals, schools, housing for local residents and training operations.

China's assistance was limited but sincere. It fully respected the requirements of the recipient countries and attached no political conditions whatever, since assistance was not a favour bestowed on others but was based on mutual benefits. China would continue to provide assistance to African countries within the bounds of its ability.

Mr. BRÜCKNER (Denmark) said that the African continent had a huge potential for economic and social progress, as some of its countries had demonstrated. Positive trends included the initiation of economic reforms, a fall in military expenditure, a growing recognition of the need to promote human rights and popular participation, and a focus on human capacity-building. On the negative side, a number of conflicts had resulted in great human suffering and physical destruction causing a shift in emphasis from long-term to short-term policies. Southern Africa, however, had entered upon a new and more favourable epoch.

Decision makers in African countries were increasingly realizing that they must bear the brunt of economic and social development, and that the international community could only be a collaborator and supporter, not an initiator. International summits and conferences thus had an important role to play by providing forums for discussion, joint thinking, and the development of new concepts and strategies. However, strategies and

priorities alone would not produce the necessary changes, and the donor community must continue to shoulder its share of the responsibility.

Denmark's development assistance currently totalled more than 1 per cent of GNP; it firmly supported the 0.7 per cent ODA target and urged other donor countries to reach the 0.15 per cent target for the least developed countries (LDCs).

In the circumstances, the regrettable decision of many donors to reduce their aid gave cause for great concern. Existing funds must be concentrated on the poorest countries, with the emphasis on poverty alleviation. Financial flows were not in themselves sufficient to bring about economic and social development, and the debt burden continued to be a major obstacle particularly for the LDCs. His Government had already cancelled almost all outstanding bilateral ODA debt of the LDCs, and had announced its intention to extend the measure to a number of other low-income countries. It hoped that other countries would follow suit.

Multilateral debt was also placing increasingly heavy burdens on some of the poorest countries, and his delegation had proposed that the soft windows of the multilateral development banks should, in future, make grants to the poorest countries rather than soft loans. It had also proposed that their debt should, on certain conditions, be cancelled, and that donors should compensate in future replenishments for the lack of reflows, a measure that should not impose an excessive burden on donor budgets and would be of crucial importance to the African countries.

Economic stabilization remained the "keyword" in terms of the economic situation in Africa. Imbalances and distortions in national economies would have to be removed if sustainable growth was to be achieved. His delegation emphasized the need for a broader development strategy addressing the long-term structural constraints, and integrating poverty alleviation and social considerations into economic policies. Ownership was also a crucial question in structural adjustment, and continuing attention needed to be given to both the right and the obligation of recipient countries to assume responsibility for their programmes.

Human-resources development, popular participation, institutional democracy, the participation of women in the development process, and the development of the social sector were all essential if the economic tide was

to turn. Increased emphasis also needed to be given to general trade facilitation, the improvement of customs procedures, and the elimination of corruption.

As for donor coordination, assistance would become really effective only if targeted towards specific objectives of each recipient country. The time had passed for selecting development policies; what was needed was concerted effort on the part of both bilateral and multilateral donors to build on the lessons of the past. Special attention to and priority for the development of Africa must remain firmly on the international agenda.

Baroness CHALKER of Wallasey (United Kingdom), having endorsed the statement by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union, and stated that her Government was committed to making Africa the success story of the 1990s, said that the Secretary-General's report (E/1995/81) was a well balanced one and her delegation endorsed the five priorities it identified. She welcomed United Nations efforts to promote a shared commitment between African countries and their development partners, especially at the country level.

As the recent OAU Summit had again confirmed, African development would depend primarily on the efforts and policies of the African countries themselves. It was gratifying to note that the majority of them had economic reform programmes in place and that 36 of them had held democratic elections since 1990. The countries that had held firmly to the path of economic reform had outperformed the less wholehearted, but more was needed and would not be easily achieved.

Significant support was still needed from the international community, and indeed grants and new loans to Africa in 1993 had exceeded outflows by $7 billion. Although the United Kingdom spent 40 per cent of its bilateral aid programme in Africa, there was no room for complacency. All donors should cooperate in finding new ways of improving the quality of their support, promoting capacity-building, encouraging FDI and ensuring that special attention was given to primary education, family planning and basic health care. The European Union had agreed on an amount of 13.3 billion for the European Development Fund - a substantial reaffirmation of its support for the ACP - and it was to be hoped that the ACP countries would agree

that the mid-term review of the Lomé Convention could be concluded. The United Kingdom contribution was pitched at a level that enabled it to maintain an active and viable bilateral aid programme to Africa.

Her Government's two broad objectives in Africa were: to work with all development partners to support Africa's own efforts to promote poverty alleviation, good governance and economic reform; and to promote conflict prevention and resolution. One means thereto was debt reduction. Her Government thus welcomed the agreement on the Naples terms, raising the level of debt reduction to 67 per cent, in line with the Trinidad Terms initiative, put forward by the Prime Minister in 1990. So far, 11 countries had benefited from those terms, and her Government would continue to press for a full and generous application thereof and urge the Paris Club to consider debt reduction of up to 80 per cent in exceptional cases. In addition, the recent Summit of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries had agreed to encourage further help to countries with multilateral debt problems.

Since the last session of the General Assembly - at which her delegation had proposed a framework for conflict resolution and peace-keeping in Africa - the United Kingdom had co-hosted conferences on the subject with Ghana, Egypt and Nigeria and presented its findings to the Secretaries-General of the OAU and the United Nations. It had also contributed to the OAU Peace Fund and was seeking further opportunities to develop the preventive capabilities of the United Nations and OAU.

Mr. MONGBE (Observer for Benin), having endorsed the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that Africa was passing through a particularly difficult phase in its history and continued to live in torment and fear of a social explosion whose consequences could not fail to extend to other continents. That state of affairs was exacerbated by armed conflicts, the AIDS pandemic, the persistence of epidemic diseases such as malaria, emergency situations, permanent drought, natural disasters and desertification among many other hardships and misfortunes.

Africa was, nevertheless, a continent of immense potentiality and studies had shown that, if its per capita income were doubled, it could be transformed into a $500 billion market for basic needs, advanced technology and services. It was a reservoir of strategic resources with 70 per cent of the world production of cobalt, 46 per cent of diamonds, 44 per cent of

chromium, 32 per cent of manganese, 32 per cent of gold, 24 per cent of phosphate and 10 per cent of petroleum. It also possessed 40 per cent of the planets' hydroelectric potential. In spite of those potentialities, however, its share in international trade barely exceeded 2 per cent.

Some negative factors were due to mistakes made by African countries, and they should have the political courage to admit the fact. Priority had been given to inflated projects of doubtful viability to the detriment of small- and medium-sized projects. The situation had also been bedevilled by incompetence and bad management, corruption and a lack of consistency in economic policy. Some African States devoted as much as one third of their national budgets to military expenditure at the cost of poverty alleviation and economic development projects.

The time had come for the continent to develop a new awareness and rid itself of old habits, including the conviction that development would come entirely from abroad. In that context, his delegation welcomed the important commitments recently undertaken by the OAU Council of Ministers.

Among the commitments to Africa entered into by the international community over the past five years, his delegation attached particular importance to UN-NADAF and was concerned that its implementation was proceeding so slowly, since it offered an opportunity to reverse the marginalization of Africa and the widespread discouragement associated therewith. The commitment undertaken through the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of UN-NADAF was of considerable political importance in that it specified follow-up control mechanisms and guaranteed that Africa would be one of the five United Nations priorities.

Unfortunately, UN-NADAF had so far been applied in a rudimentary and partial way only. Attempts by African delegations at the follow-up high-level meetings to have a resolution adopted for the creation of a fund for the diversification of African commodities had been rejected by the representatives of OECD countries, and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 49/142, recommending improvements in existing compensation mechanisms and the enlargement of common fund facilities combined with the establishment of a special contribution to programmes projects for the diversification of African commodities was but a meagre consolation. It was to be hoped that the current high-level segment of the Council and the

dialogue between African delegations and officials of the Bretton Woods institutions would remove the bottlenecks that were preventing effective implementation of the Agenda.

It was important that Africa and its partners should agree on the development objectives set by the Lagos Plan and the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. The African strategy was based on the necessity to promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development supported by a balance between production and consumption and the accumulation of local resources.

In spite of the drawbacks he had mentioned, the countries of Africa were making praiseworthy efforts to honour the commitments they had undertaken. The development process would stagnate, however, if their efforts continued to be hampered by the burden of external debt, inadequate capital flows, obstacles to market access and depressed commodity prices and terms of trade. The experience of other countries and regions, showed that vast and rapid development was achievable, provided an adequate flow of external capital was available. There was a need for a kind of African Marshall Plan, and the priority accorded to Africa by the international community could find no better expression than such a plan.

Dr. NAKAJIMA (Director-General, World Health Organization) said that the priority given to Africa's economic and social development could not be achieved or sustained unless its health development was also ensured. His Organization's policy and technical-cooperation priorities emphasized two major areas of health intervention: the strengthening of primary health-care services relating to women and children's health, and the development and strengthening of a surveillance system to deal with epidemics and emerging diseases. Its objective was to help African countries to develop a rapid response capacity in health emergencies, even in times of conflict or unrest, particularly where that capacity had been impaired by economic recession and structural adjustment. Since the maintenance of a competitive, productive and adaptable workforce was a major asset in attracting investment, investors also needed to be reassured concerning prevailing health conditions.

To meet intermediate and long-term development concerns, WHO intended to focus on the priorities of malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and environmental health. Malaria was responsible for about 2 million deaths

a year, 90 per cent of them in Africa; while an estimated total of over 10 million people were infected with AIDs, sub-Saharan Africa being the worst affected area in the world.

WHO would continue to support vaccine development and other malaria-control activities and to promote and coordinate research, prevention and control activities on sexually transmitted diseases and the risk factors of HIV transmission to children. It had been promoting a new strategy to ensure that short-course chemotherapy was used effectively to prevent the spread of drug-resistant tuberculosis strains. On environmental health, it had, launched the "Africa 2000" initiative to ensure access to safe water and sanitation.

The Onchocerciasis-control Programme had been successfully completed and 25 million hectares of land had been made available in Africa for human resettlement and agricultural use. Eradication of dracunculiasis was nearing completion, and most African countries had joined in the campaign to eradicate poliomyelitis and leprosy by the year 2000.

The various WHO programmes had provided countries with much useful experience and basic public health services, thus strengthening their primary health-care network. They had also brought health personnel and services into contact with the people and laid the foundation for improved and mutual understanding and cooperation. In general, moreover, they had demonstrated the many social, political and economic returns of health development programmes.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.